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FROM

Pres. C. W. Eliot

TRANSACTIONS

OF THE

Bronx Society of Arts and Sciences

VOLUME I PART II

Bronx soc., etc

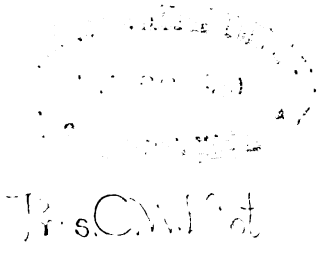
Poe Centenary Exercises

January 19, 1909



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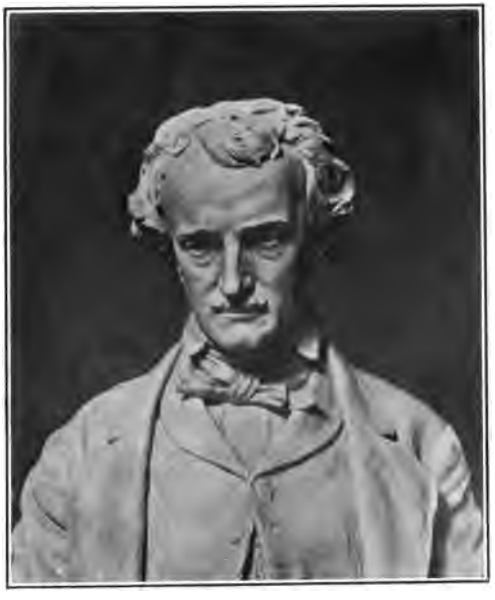
IN MEMORIAM
EDGAR ALLAN POE

1809-1849



JANUARY NINETEENTH

NINETEEN HUNDRED AND NINE



EDGAR ALLAN POE.

EDMUND T. QUINN, SCULPTOR.

Bronze bust, erected in Poe Park and presented to the City of New York by The Bronx Society of Arts and Sciences.

TRANSACTIONS

OF THE

BRONX SOCIETY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

POE CENTENARY EXERCISES.

NOT many eminent literary men have made their homes in what is now the Borough of the Bronx. It is therefore proper that of all those who have dwelt here and have deserved recognition the souvenir should be preserved. This is an obvious duty in the case of Edgar Allan Poe, whose place among the foremost in his particular realm is now secure.

The stay of more than three years in Fordham witnessed not the least tragic period of that tragic life, its pathos being heightened by the contrast with its idyllic setting and the enjoyment of its commencement, which are described in his "Landor's Cottage." The cottage still stands, the principal material relic of this period. It was the scene of the new start in life under the pleasantest auspices, but the sunny skies were soon overclouded by the renewed struggle with misfortune, want, sickness and suffering, his apprehension for the life of his Virginia, only too well justified by her death. Here he produced some of his most important literary work. He paced its little porch or wandered among the trees of its orchard as he sought the inspiration of his weird muse or agonized at his loved one wasting away, at times even cold and hungry. Hence she was carried to her temporary resting place in the church yard not far off. Nearby are some of the houses, still standing, where he visited. Not far distant is the site of the little cemetery, the ideally conceived scene of

"Ulalume." Further afield are his haunts and walks:—High Bridge, West Farms, the aqueduct, and the region around the present site of New York University.

The city long ago recognized the importance of his memory by establishing the park bearing his name, opposite the cottage.

In view of his sojourn here and the impress of his memory left upon this region, it was thought to be eminently fitting that the Bronx Society of Arts and Sciences should conduct memorial exercises on the centenary of his birth, to perpetuate the local associations and leave a permanent monument near the spot where he lived, and to honor the name and work of Poe as a man of letters.

With this in view, exercises were planned and carried out, consisting of two distinct parts, those centering around the cottage and the monument to be dedicated, and those conducted in the auditorium of New York University nearby.

The very meritorious bust of Poe by the sculptor, Edmond T. Quinn, secured by the Society through the generous gifts of its members and others, was placed on a suitable marble pedestal in a spot in Poe Park, directly opposite the cottage and facing it across Kings Bridge Road, and was presented to the City by the Society.

The cottage was decorated with flags and was opened to visitors, who were received by a committee of ladies. The Park Commissioner had erected a platform near the monument for the convenience of guests. He set up a flagstaff and furnished a flag to use at the unveiling, and he put his car at the service of the committee, as did some others, to bring the special guests from the station. The Park Department built the foundation for the monument, and it has since made a plantation of evergreens around it which make a proper background and greatly add to its effect. The Second Battery furnished a detail to fire the salute. Mr. Wilton Lackaye accepted the invitation of the Committee to read at both parts of the exercises. The day was very cold and clear; the ground was covered with snow. About two hundred people were present at these unveiling exercises.



DEDICATION OF A MONUMENT

IN

POE PARK, FORDHAM, NEW YORK CITY

BUST BY EDMOND T. QUINN SCULPTOR

READING

Poe's Cottage at Fordham *Boner*

WILTON LACKAYE

PRESENTATION TO THE CITY

ARTHUR A. STOUGHTON, *Chairman, Poe Memorial Committee*

ACCEPTANCE ON BEHALF OF THE CITY

HON. JOSEPH I. BERRY, *Commissioner of Parks for the Bronx*

UNVEILING

Salute fired by the Second Battery Field Artillery, N. G. N. Y.

CAPTAIN LANSFORD F. SHERRY

OPENING OF THE COTTAGE TO VISITORS



Mr. Stoughton said:

" One hundred years ago was born the man whose eminence in letters, as poet, story teller and critic, we celebrate today.

It is singularly fitting that a memorial of him should face the cottage, the only place which, in his maturity, he could call home; which he held till his death, and through whose 'lowly portal' he came and went during the wasting away of his adored Virginia and his own heroic struggle with fate, and in which, often cold and hungry, always burdened in mind, he calmly wrote his later masterpieces.

Others will today render homage to his genius, and appreciation of his work as man of letters; it is my privilege to stand for a brief moment as the mouthpiece of those who delight to honor the former tenant of this cottage, whose spirit haunts this region, and whose name this Park bears, offering to the City of New York this bronze, the sympathetic work of the artist, Edmond T. Quinn.

On behalf of the Bronx Society of Arts and Sciences, and

of those others who have aided in this undertaking, I have the honor, Mr. Commissioner, to give into your keeping this monument to Edgar Allan Poe."

Hon. Joseph I. Berry replied, accepting the gift for the City, on behalf of the Park Department, giving an interesting description from his personal recollection and knowledge, of the former state of the neighborhood and of the features of the surrounding country, visible from the Poe cottage, before fields and farms and country roads and cow-paths had given way to city improvements, and when the drowsy hamlet of Fordham did not suspect that it was soon to be swallowed up by the distant New York. He brought back the old setting of the cottage very vividly, telling of his own familiarity with it, and reminiscences of the relations of his family with the other families of the place, including the Poes.

At the close of these exercises those present were transported to New York University in special cars, where a large audience filled to overflowing the great hall. Professor Woodberry came from Beverly, Mass., to preside. A number of guests occupied places on the platform, literary men, representatives of universities and local organizations. Among them Mr. Richard Watson Gilder, since deceased, deserves mention for the ready aid and counsel he gave to the committee during the preparation of the program. Of those who contributed to the musical part of the program Mr. David Bispham should be remarked. His performance was unique in giving a completely satisfying rendering of The Raven.



MEMORIAL MEETING

AT

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

CHANCELLOR HENRY M. MACCRACKEN
President of the Society

ADDRESS

PROFESSOR GEORGE E. WOODBERRY

POEM

Our Israfel
Written for the Occasion EDWIN MARKHAM

ADDRESS

Poe's Life at Fordham
HENRY NOBLE MACCRACKEN

READINGS

*Ulalume
To One in Paradise
WILTON LACKAYE

SONGS

*Annabel Lee

From the unpublished musical score of Professor Miles M. Dawson

*The Bells

W. POSTLEY SINCLAIR

ORATION

Poe at the End of a Century

HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

READINGS

To Helen

The City in the Sea

WILTON LACKAYE

RECITATION TO MUSIC

The Raven, a Melodrame

DAVID BISPHAM

MS. First time of performance. Accompanied by the Composer, Arthur Bergh

Music by the Orchestra of the Morris High School preceding the Exercises

* Written at Fordham

INTRODUCTION.

BY CHANCELLOR HENRY MITCHELL MACCRACKEN,

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

IT falls to me, as president of the Bronx Society of Arts and Sciences, which has just entered upon its fourth year of existence, to introduce the chairman of this centennial celebration of a great master of the poetic and literary art. When this society adopted its name, it intended to give each of the two words "arts" and "sciences" the broadest meaning. We mean by "arts" first the liberal arts, as that phrase is used when we speak of a bachelor of arts or of a college of arts, and we mean also the fine arts—architecture and sculpture and painting. By "sciences" we mean both the pure and the applied sciences. It is interesting to note that within our brief career of four years we have established six committees, of which two are devoted strictly to the sciences, namely: the Committee on the Natural Sciences and the Committee on the Industries and the Applied Sciences. The existence of the great botanical and zoölogical gardens in our borough insure the society's remembering the natural sciences, particularly when we have as the chairman of our Executive Committee, Dr. Britton, of the Botanical Garden, and when we have had given us for our scientific and historical collections spacious room in the Lorillard Mansion of Bronx Park.

The remaining four committees belong rather to the realm of the arts, namely: the Committee on the Fine Arts, the Committee on Music, the Committee on Literature and Books, and finally, the Committee on Historic Sites and Relics.

It is nearly three years since, on March 15, 1906, an appropriate committee was instructed to see what measures should be taken to secure the preservation of the Poe Cottage—one of the historic sites within our Borough of the Bronx. This

early attention to the connection of Edgar Allan Poe with this part of New York City as a householder for several years prepared our society to take prompt steps on the approach of this centennial day for its appropriate celebration. The fruits of the thoroughly intelligent and wise efforts of the committee under Mr. Arthur A. Stoughton, its chairman, are manifest in today's program. A portion of this program has already been fulfilled by the dedication an hour ago of a monument to the poet in the park which bears his name, directly opposite to his former home, near a mile to the northeast of this university campus. The more extended and important part of the program, which includes the names of men distinguished in literature, in poetry and in dramatic art, is now to engage our attention for an hour.

Before introducing the Chairman of the day, I beg permission to read the following telegram from the University of Virginia:

"University of Virginia, January 20, 1909.

Chancellor Henry Mitchell MacCracken, University Heights, New York City.

The University of Virginia greets New York University with the hope that the Hall of Fame may some day be as hospitable to genius as is your University to-day.

(Signed) CHARLES W. KENT,
Head of the Department of English Literature."

To which the following reply has been sent:

"Professor Charles W. Kent, Head of the Department of English Literature, University of Virginia.

New York University reciprocates the greeting of the University of Virginia and will gladly fellowship with her in communicating to the One Hundred Electors of the Hall of Fame, representing all the forty-five states of our union, important facts and enduring sentiments respecting famous Americans.

(Signed) HENRY M. MACCRACKEN."

Letters of regret have been received from a number of literary people, of which I will read the following:

NORTHAMPTON, MASS., Dec. 27, 1908.

"DOCTOR ARTHUR B. LAMB,

Secretary of the Bronx Society of Arts and Sciences.

Dear Sir:—I am grateful for the special invitation of the Bronx Society of Arts and Sciences to the celebration of the centenary of the birth of Edgar Allan Poe, and sincerely regret that my absence at the date of it in a distant part of the country must prevent my attendance.

In my sense of deprivation may I be allowed to say that, to my mind, our American civilization had, and has, in Poe, not only one of the greatest among its few most masterful poets, but one who, more than any other, initially kindled, and still kindles, the priceless flame of poetic feeling in the hearts of innumerable Americans at the fateful moment when they are first seeking to find or make their share and place in the world's life and onward march.

With renewed thanks for the honor offered me, I beg to remain ever,

Yours truly,

(Signed) GEORGE W. CABLE."

Upon the recommendation of the Centennial Committee of the Bronx Society of Arts and Sciences, it is now my duty and privilege to present as the chairman of this Celebration of the birth of Edgar Allan Poe, one who is well known to all of us both as author and as teacher, Dr. George E. Woodberry, formerly of this city.

THE POE CENTENARY.

ADDRESS BY PROF. GEO. E. WOODBERRY.

WE are gathered here to do honor to genius. One name is on our lips, one memory is in our hearts —that of Edgar Allan Poe. Sixty years ago five mourners stood round his grave; today in five great cities of the nation, and elsewhere, men gather, as we do here, by scores and hundreds, to commemorate his birth. It is because genius, once born into life, is indestructible; it is safe alike from any stroke of earthly fortune and from time's attack, it is the immortal vigor of the race. Men do not willingly let the memory of it die; men protect its memory, and this is singularly true of Poe. No American name in literature is, I think, so warmly cherished. It is a pleasure, too, to recognize American genius, and today it is an added grace that Poe was a child of the South. He was, nevertheless, both in his genius and his life, remarkably free from locality. It has not been sufficiently observed hitherto, I think, that more than any of his contemporaries Poe occupied a central position in his generation; he was better acquainted with the literary product of the time, and both by his residence and his letters was in touch with a wide area of the country. He had lived in Richmond, Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York, and had repeatedly visited New England, and his correspondence reached Cincinnati, St. Louis, Louisville, Tennessee and Georgia. More than the others, he had national range.

Poe was a Southerner by his breeding; he was an American by his career; he was a citizen of the world by his renown. It was a distinguishing trait of his personality that when his first tales were hardly dry from the press, he was already negotiating for publication in England. He always belonged in spirit to the larger world. The adventurous sense of it was his cadet dream of joining the armies of Poland when he left

West Point. The literary stamp of it was that in the first line of his criticism, unfledged critic that he was, he set up a standard, not that of his leisured hearth of Virginia or the newspaper offices of New York or the parlor coteries of Boston, but the standard of all the world; and though he contracted opportunism, that was only the wear and tear of practical life on a fine ideal.

But it is not enough to be a critic. No critic ever had his hundredth birthday celebrated. Poe was from his youth an all-round man of letters. One trait which peculiarly wins the respect of his fellow craftsmen, I think, is that he never was anything else but a man of letters. He never earned any money except by his pen. He labored twenty years; for four of these he had a salary as an editor, and a dozen times he spoke from a platform; otherwise he was an unattached writer and lived from day to day. I have no manner of doubt he was sincere in saying that in thus adhering to his profession he cheerfully bore poverty. His profession pauperized him. Is it not startling to think that we are gathered here, in a city which is the shrine and throne of gold, to do honor to a man who was a beggar all his days? It is a striking tribute to true values. I make no complaint of fate. Literature dedicates her sons to the vow of worldly sacrifice. It has been so of old time. He was not chosen to be poor more than the others were chosen. Hawthorne and Emerson and Poe—the three most brilliant men in our literature—all led meagre lives, but Poe alone was the perfect victim. Poe not only lived meagrely; at times he starved. Poverty is a terrible foe; it is thorough in its work on men and nations; it kills. What a victory it is of the spirit over its life, of the spirit that makes for immortality through all disguises of human wretchedness—that we have today in our minds and hearts, out of Poe's meagre and starved life, poetry, romance, the imagery that fades not away! It is true that there is that in it which terrifies; here is the legend and superscription of pain and death; his music is the requiem of the soul that

breathed it forth. But his, too, is praise. Poe made of his fate his victory and, for the victim of life, that is the masterstroke. We "bid fair peace be to his sable shroud."

It is fit now, though late, to bring the laurel to him who first sent the dark green leaf across the sea to Tennyson and Mrs. Browning, and among ourselves brought it to Hawthorne and Lowell in their obscure years. And he has more to grace his memory—that which all men value, the kindly recollection of those who were most nigh him. Poe won the laurel and the marble; but the mortal flower upon his grave is his—that he endeared himself to his friends. He had many friends. He had the best. There was no truer gentleman then alive than Kennedy, who to the honor of Baltimore befriended his early manhood. There was no more kindly colleague than Willis, who gave him his hand in New York and never drew it away. There were no warmer comrades for mates in life than Thomas, Halleck and Burr. Poe had also that power which is one of the singularities of genius—the power to let the soul shine on all. His office-boy idolized him; children suffered him to play with them; and every wayfarer who touched his hand or had speech of him on his wandering road, seems to have remembered the light of that day forever.

Sad are some of the thoughts that rise in me on this occasion. I seem to share them with you. These traits of fortune and of character to which I have alluded, belong to humanity, and link genius to the understanding hearts of men; but genius is itself the most revealing force of the soul; its manifestations are revelations of our nature. The genius of Poe was one of the manifold forms of humanity; else it were not genius; but that man who would speak rightly of him must, in his vision of human nature, have room and marge enough to know that the spirit of life is infinite in its flowering, that the Shepherd of us all has many folds.

OUR ISRAFEL.

In Memory of Edgar Allan Poe.

BY EDWIN MARKHAM.

Feb. 19, 1909.

I

The sad great gifts the austere Muses bring
 In their stern hands to make their poets of
Were laid on him that he might darkly sing
 Of Beauty, Death and Love.

They laid upon him hunger as a dower,
 A hunger for a loveliness more strange
Than Earth can give—more wild than any hour
 Of all this chance and change.

They laid upon him Music's trembling charm,
 The mystery of sound, of shaken air,
Whose touch can lift the spirit or alarm—
 Build rapture, build despair.

They touched him with imagination's rod,
 The power that built these heavens that soar and seem—
These heavens that are the daring of some God
 Stirred by the lyric dream.

And then (for oh, the Muses do not spare!)
 They set for him one final gift apart:
They gave him sorrow as a pack to bear,
 Sorrow to break the heart.

II

And so they called the poet into Time,
 The saddest and the proudest of the race
That ever came this way with sound of rhyme,
 In quest of Beauty's face.

He came with rumor of the mystery,
 Crying the wonder ever on before,
The laureate of dreams that cannot be,
 Of Night and the Nevermore.

He steered toward shadow with melodious helm,
 Touching with somber prow the wharves of Dis,
Exploring all the dim and hollow realm
 This side the last abyss.

He looked on cities in their crumbling hours,
 Where Death obscurely mumbles out his rune,
Hoary, remote, alone, where time-torn towers
 Hang spectral in the moon.

He mused among the dim sarcophagi,
 While far upon the rim of ruin fled
A host of hooded forms that hurried by
 With laughters to the dead.

III

He walked our streets as on a lonely strand:
 His country was not here—it was afar.
Not here his home, not here his motherland,
 But in some statelier star.

Life was his exile, Earth his alien shore,
 And these were foreign faces that he passed:
For he had other language, other lore,
 And he must home at last.

His country was not here, but in the isles
 Of Aidenn ringed around with lustrous seas,
Where golden galleys skim the silver miles
 Or sleep upon the breeze.

And there were gardens where the fountains springs
 In valleys of a many-colored grass—
Gardens where bulbuls in the shadows sing,
 And rose-pale maidens pass—

Gardens of hyacinths and asphodels,
 Inwoven with the sounds of warbling rills,
With triple-tinted suns and lilied wells,
 Walled in by golden hills.

And there he built him palaces of song,
 Lifting their spires against the pallid moon,
With corridors where shapes of shadow throng
 When night is at her noon.

He sought his dream-love there by many names
 Of terror and of pity and of peace—
Lenore, Ligeia (burning like pale flames)
 Morella, Berenice.

He trod high chambers lit with ruby light,
 And heard in the hush the somber arras stir,
And stir again, in the deep and secret night,
 With memories of her.

He heard the demon whispers in the deep,
 And songs of deathless love where seraphs are;
He saw the cliffs of Time, a ghostly heap,
 But over the cliffs the star!

IV

O poet, not for you the trampling street,
 The wrangling crowd that cry and clutch for gold,
And so you followed Beauty's flying feet
 Into the dim and old.

O poet, life was bitter to your heart:
 These stones have memories of the tears you shed.
Forgive the serpent tongue, the flying dart—
 Forgive us from the dead.

You sang your song: we gave you scorn for pay:
 For beauty's bread we gave a stone; and yet
Because our eyes were holden on the way,
 Remember to forget.

Sing, Israfel: you have your star at last,
 Your morning star; but we—we still must live!
So now that all is over, all is past,
 Forget, forget—forgive!



THE POE COTTAGE FROM KINGS BRIDGE ROAD
In its original location
Photographed 1884 by Stoughton

POE'S LIFE IN FORDHAM.

BY HENRY NOBLE MACCRACKEN, PH.D.,
OF YALE UNIVERSITY.

THE three years from June, 1846, to June, 1849, which Edgar Allan Poe passed at Fordham in our Borough of the Bronx were made up of half a year of foreboding and illness, of an "immemorial year" of seclusion and inactivity, and of a year and a half of fitful yet fruitful renewal of literary effort. One event determines this division of his life; one shadow darkens his days to the end; the loss of his wife. The half-year of foreboding and illness tells the story of Poe's loss of self-mastery brought on by dread of the coming of death to his Virginia; the immemorial year tells us of the prostration of his faculties

when the blow had fallen; the eighteen months of fitful effort outline the slow and only partial recovery, as he put aside his grief for her, and feverishly sought the world again.

For her sake Poe had left the house on Amity Street in the city, nearer our old university home* than his Fordham house is to this new one, had bidden farewell to the pleasant daily society among the literati on Waverley Place, and practised economy and looked for rest and recovery in the white cottage on the Kingsbridge Road, of which I am to tell you.

In the very year that Poe came to Fordham the township of West Farms was made, comprising all that part of the township of Westchester lying west of the Bronx River, north of the Harlem, south of Yonkers and east of the Hudson. It included not only the region known as West Farms, but also the land included in the old manors of Fordham and Morrisania. In all this territory, in Poe's day, lived not more than three thousand people, of which number the village of West Farms, at the head of navigation on the Bronx River, contained about three hundred. No other collection in this region was more than a mere hamlet, and Fordham was one of the least of these. At first it was a mere cross-roads, where the roads from Williams' or Williams's Bridge and Kingsbridge met to continue to West Farms, and the Pelham Manor road crossed east and west. It was only when the Harlem railway gave to its station at that point the name of Fordham, which up to that time had been vaguely attached to Kingsbridge and its vicinity, that a distinct community settled down at the gates of the Jesuit College of St. John.

The road from the station, winding up on a pavement of native rock to the level of Fordham Ridge and turning sharply to the north, in ten minutes passed close by the little old house which Poe chose. The wider road of today goes even closer. You who today have seen the house need no description of it from me. Its interior has not changed save that the extension to the east, as Mr. W. H. Valentine tells me, is a later

* Washington Square East.



POE CHERRY TREE
Since cut down
From a Photograph by Geo. E. Stonebridge

addition. There were fruit-trees in the yard, cherry-trees near the house, and an apple orchard farther off near the rocky ledge, that served as retaining wall for the eastern part of the acre. From the little piazza one could look out on the sloping acre of closely cropped greensward under the trees, towards the east and south, over St. John's grounds and the meadows below them. The higher points of the ledge afforded glimpses of the Long Island hills beyond the East River. To the northwest of the cottage extended a wood. Here Poe walked with his friends, or competed with them in friendly athletics.

Later in his residence, Poe started a flower garden, and kept singing birds in cages hung under the cherry branches. We are told of mignonette and heliotrope, of dahlias and other autumnal flowers.

The disposition of the rooms in the house is a matter of uncertainty. It seems probable, however, that the west room downstairs was a bedroom, the east a sittingroom; the west room upstairs was Poe's study, the east Mrs. Clemm's room.

There were but few neighbors. Across the road, a little to the south still stands John Valentine's white cottage; farther up the road were others of the same type, preserving the old Dutch ideal of neatness, compactness and simplicity.

The history of the Poe cottage, aside from Poe's brief residence in it, has not hitherto interested Poe's many biographers. For the few facts I have been able to gather about it, I am chiefly indebted to the kindness of one of the members of the New York University Council, Mr. Clarence H. Kelsey, president of the Title Guarantee and Trust Company. To go no further back than the end of the eighteenth century and the Fordham Manor days, we find the little triangular piece of ground about one acre in extent, with the cottage in its northwest corner, in the possession of John Berrian. It was known to the nearest farmer in 1816 as Berrian's land. In 1822 Jonas Farrington bought it for $500 and sold it to Richard Corsa in March, 1828, for $650, after a sale and repurchase in November and March 27–8. John Valentine bought the tract from Corsa, March 28, 1846, for a thousand dollars. He must have advertised the place for rent at once, for by June, 1846, Poe had become his tenant. Acting on good business principles, Valentine let the house for ten per cent. of its cost, a hundred dollars a year.

To the cottage, then, in the summer of 1846, came the poet, aged thirty-six, his wife, aged twenty-three, and his wife's mother, who was also his aunt, a woman of fifty-six. From the stray scraps we can gather, they were from the first pleased with their home. "The place is a beautiful one," wrote Poe



FORDHAM MANOR REFORMED CHURCH

Virginia was buried here in the Valentine Vault

From a Photograph by A. E. Lickman

to a friend. Two years later, in a fanciful love-letter to Mrs. Whitman, he placed this cottage in an idyllic setting not unlike its real surroundings, as the home of his happiest dreams. This he afterwards enlarged into the sketch called Landor's Cottage. Here the resemblance is even striking.

He writes: "The main building was about twenty-four feet long and sixteen broad, certainly not more. Its total height from the ground to the apex of the roof, could not have exceeded eighteen feet." He tells how from a tree in front of

the door hung cages, with mocking-bird, oriole and bobolink. The pillars of the piazza were wreathed in jasmine and sweet honeysuckle. The whole house, with its wings, was constructed of the old-fashioned Dutch shingles, broad, and with unrounded corners. The road after passing the gate seemed to lie upon a natural ledge, sloping gradually down along the face of the northeastern cliffs. (This corresponds well to the Williamsbridge road, as it used to run.) "The expanse of the velvety green turf was relieved here and there, by an occasional snowy shrub."

I need not multiply the likenesses of Landor's cottage to the general picture of Poe's cottage as described by visitors. It seems clear that far from being discontented with his simple home, the poet could idealize it with delight, and put many of its characteristic features into the romantic home of his imagination.

"It was the sweetest little cottage imaginable," said Mrs. Clemm, and added: "how supremely happy we were in our dear cottage home! We three lived only for each other. Eddie rarely left his beautiful home. I attended to his literary business, for he, poor fellow, knew nothing about money transactions. How should he, brought up in luxury and extravagance?"

"He passed the greater part of the morning in his study, and, after he had finished his task for the day, he worked in our beautiful flower garden, or read and recited poetry to us. Every one who knew him intimately, loved him."

But there were no flowers in the garden the first year. Those who called upon the poet, whether literary friends from the city, the kindly neighbors, or the companionable fathers from the Jesuit College, found an anxious household. During the first few months Poe's anxiety over his wife drove him to nervous breakdown. To an early visitor he talked of his *Marginalia* and *Literati,* a series of short critical essays on notable figures in New York's literary world, then appearing. The strain under which he labored is apparent. To a sug-



OLD AQUEDUCT PATH
A favorite walk of Poe
From a Photograph by Geo. E. Stonebridge

gestion that some of the criticisms were unduly eulogistic, he said, "If (a critic) were placed on the rack, or if one he loved better than his own life were writhing there, I can conceive of his forging a note against the Bank of Fame, in favour of a would-be poet. . . . Would you blame a man for not allowing his sick wife to die?"

Occasionally Poe went to the city, by the Harlem railway, which ran half a dozen trains each way daily between Williamsbridge and the City Hall. More often, no doubt, as she says, it was Mrs. Clemm who went. "Winter after winter,"

wrote N. P. Willis, "for years the most touching sight to us, in this whole city, has been that tireless minister to genius, thinly and insufficiently clad, going from office to office with a poem, or an article on some literary subject, to sell—sometimes simply pleading in a broken voice that he was ill, and begging for him, mentioning nothing but that 'he was ill,' whatever might be the reason for his writing nothing—and never, amid all her tears and recitals of distress, suffering one syllable to escape her lips that could convey a doubt of him, or a complaint, or a lessening of pride in his genius and good intentions."

But with the falling leaves fell destitution. In her bedchamber, scant and poverty-stricken, yet so purely clean, lay the wife. Only a white counterpane and sheets covered the straw bed. She was wrapped in her husband's great coat, and a large tortoise-shell cat lay on her bosom, giving warmth to her chilled frame.

The visitor who tells us this enlisted the sympathies of Mrs. M. L. Shew, the daughter of a physician, and full of charity. All we need to know of the blessed presence of this woman in the Fordham home, can be understood, without comment, from this letter, one of the most touching in our language, and written but two days before Virginia's death.

"Kindest dearest Friend—My poor Virginia yet lives, although failing fast and now suffering much pain. May God grant her life until she sees you and thanks you once again. Her bosom is full to overflowing—like my own—with a boundless, inexpressible gratitude to you. Lest she may never see you more—she bids me say that she sends you her sweetest kiss of love and will die blessing you. But come, oh come tomorrow. Yes, I will be calm; everything you so nobly wish to see me. My mother sends you, also, her warmest love and thanks. She begs me to ask you, if possible, to make arrangements at home so that you may stay with us tomorrow. I enclose the order to the Postmaster. Heaven bless you and farewell. Edgar A. Poe."



HIGH BRIDGE—A HAUNT OF THE POET

The Speedway in the foreground is modern

From a Photograph by Geo. E. Stonebridge

Throughout the immemorial year of 1847 that followed, Mrs. Shew remained, to use Poe's phrase, " his good spirit, his loyal heart, and an angel to his forlorn and darkened nature." In view of the fact that our Poe celebration enjoys the hospitality of the New York University, it is interesting to remember that Mrs. Shew took Poe's case for diagnosis to Dr. Valentine Mott, professor in the New York University Medical College and one of the greatest physicians of his time. Their decision was that in his best health Poe suffered from lesion of one side of the brain. Night and day, sharing the watch with Mrs. Clemm this devoted woman brought the poet up from his prostration. Her reward was the undying gratitude of the poet, and three poems addressed to her. In one of these Poe numbers himself as one

"Of all who on despair's unhallowed bed
Lying down to die, have suddenly arisen
At thy soft-spoken words 'Let there be light.'"

Another of these poems, now lost, since the lady did not wish it to be published, was composed from the chatter of Poe's fevered fancy taken down by Mrs. Shew. It represented, as Mr. Ingram tells us in *The Bookman* for January, 1909, the kind nurse, "so tired, so weary," watching until the pulse shall sink to eighty beats and the sedative be administered. At last the time comes, and the fragment goes on,

"The soft head bows, the sweet eyes close,
The faithful heart yields to repose.
The pulse beats ten, and intermits,
God nerve the soul that ne'er forgets,
In calm or storm, by night or day,
Its steady toil, its loyalty."

The remainder of this year was devoted to recovery and revery. By the middle of March, Poe was out of bed. Sometimes he walked over to West Farms, the nearest post-office for his letters, sometimes as had been his wont, he "vagabonded" through the woods; more often he took his favorite walk over the aqueduct right of way and across High Bridge. In Poe's time the aqueduct walk had been builded only three or four years. It has hardly changed in three score years. No more delightful path can be imagined than the grassy turf above the aqueduct in spring. Oxford has her Addison's Walk; let New York commemorate Poe's Walk.

Indefinite as Poe's descriptions of scenes generally are, I think it likely that it was the view of the Harlem valley from the lofty bridge, that suggested to Poe the account of the river journey at the opening of *The Domain of Arnheim.* This was published in March, 1847. None of the river scene was in the earlier versions of this sketch, *The Landscape Garden,* written before Poe came to Fordham. The rocky and precipitous sides of the river, the rich dense foliage of



GRAVEYARD FORMERLY AT THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF FORDHAM LANDING ROAD AND SEDGWICK AVE.

Possibly the source of Poe's imagery in Ulalume

From a Photograph by Comfort

the trees among the rocks, the continual twisting of the stream, the wide basin and lower hills of the Saw-mill creek end of the stream, are all found in this romantic description. Poe told Mrs. Whitman that he walked on High Bridge at all hours, and that he loved the place.

Far more interesting than the *Domain of Arnheim*, however, is the other production of Poe's immemorial year, *Ulalume*, the mystical tone-poem. Mrs. Whitman ten years later thought she remembered that Poe had told her it had been suggested by a midnight walk on the anniversary of a burial. It is of reviving life and ambition, pictured as a beautiful woman, that Poe tells. She wanders with him on a night in the lonesome October, until they are confronted with a tomb, the tomb of his lost Ulalume, and the mad grief for the one he had lost returns.

I put it forward timorously as a suggestion, that Poe has followed in this poem, the walk from his home down the Fordham Landing Road to what is now Sedgwick Avenue, where formerly was a graveyard of some size. Here was the "alley" shaded with great trees—cut down, I am sorry to say, when the road was widened—here was the downward path, and the dark tarn, dimly seen, may have been the smooth wide waters of the Harlem seen through the barren trees from the old graveyard. And here at the end of the path were tombs to remind him of the tomb of Virginia, who was buried not far away, behind the Fordham Manor church in the Valentines' vault. I like to think that Poe walked this way, and received inspiration for his mystic lines from this spot. The vagaries of an antiquary, you know, must be forgiven.

Arnheim, Ulalume, and *Eureka,* these are the products of Poe's immemorial year. The last was, according to Poe, a prose-poem; to the uninitiated it was a lecture on the universe, from the proceeds of which the poet hoped to get funds to start his long-dreamt-of magazine. As philosophy it has never been seriously treated by the philosophical world; upon the copy in the Yale library some scornful youth has penciled "This is the lore of a child." Yet there is enough of the stars about it to hint at the night-communings of the poet with them in his rambles through the Bronx woods.

And now we enter the last period of his residence at Fordham, beginning with the year 1848. The publication of *Eureka* gave him some money, and he made a short visit to Richmond. The early summer was notable for the composition of *The Bells.* The first stanzas of the poem, as is well known, were written at the home of Mrs. Shew in the city; the rest, or nineteen-twentieths, was probably written at Fordham. Since, according to the city directories of 1848 and 1849, Mrs. Shew was living at 51 Tenth Street, near Broadway, the church-bells which annoyed Poe, and led this friend to suggest that instead of annoyance he should get from them some verses, were the bells of Grace Church, which edifice

then, as now, was on Tenth Street at the corner of Broadway. Mrs. Shew, with a physician's mind, but nothing of the poetic, desired merely to relieve the overwrought tension of the poet's fevered brain. The line she set him was "the little silver bells." By the time he had written eighteen lines the tension was gone and he fell almost immediately into a twelve-hours sleep. Next day Mrs. Shew drove him back to Fordham.

The latter part of the summer and the fall of this year were chiefly devoted to a woman of a very different sort, Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman of Providence. She was a poet; she wrote poems and valentines to the impressionable man,

> "I seem
> To lie entranced as in some wondrous dream;
> All earthly joys forgot, all earthly fear,
> Purged in the light of thy resplendent sphere."

These are some of her words to Poe. But she could not give the poet what he needed most,—a physician's wisdom, and a nurse's constant attention. The result was a broken engagement, and Poe, disillusioned and embittered, wrote in January, 1849, to Mrs. Richmond of Lowell, a new friend: "From this day forth I shun the pestilential society of literary women. They are a heartless, unnatural, venomous, dishonorable set, with no guiding principle but inordinate self-esteem."

This Mrs. Annie Richmond, the Annie of his poem, whose friendship he had found on a lecturing trip to Lowell in the summer of 1848, was now his only comfort. In January of 1849 Poe thought to leave Fordham, and to live with Mrs. Clemm in Lowell near Annie; but there were difficulties in the way, and by February he had taken the cottage for another year. Other equally sudden changes took place in his affairs. In January he was full of hope, in March he was hopeless and penniless. Still the literary work went on; besides various tales of no great merit, the early part of the year saw the composition of *Annabel Lee* and *For Annie*.

Then came the chance of lecturing at Richmond, and about

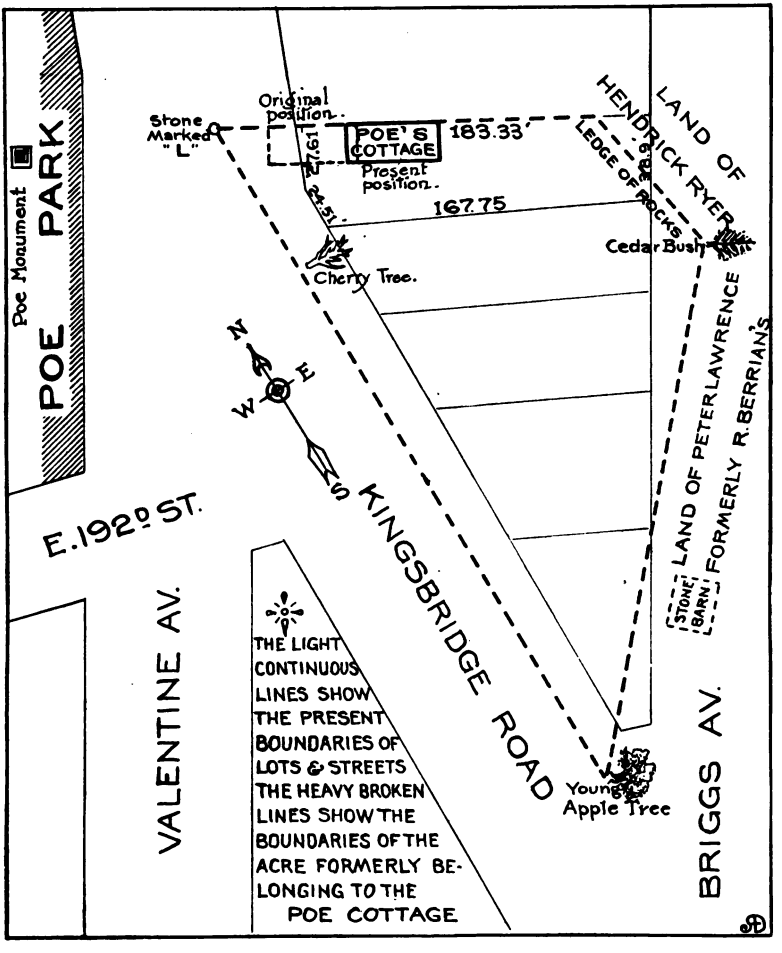
the end of June, 1849, Poe bade farewell to Mrs. Clemm, whom, like the child he was, he still called "Muddie," and left the Fordham home forever. Through the three and a half months that brought him to his death, it is not my duty to lead you. His life in Fordham was ended.

Let me in a word sum up the later history of the cottage. The kind neighbors came in, and helped Mrs. Clemm to gather her few effects, and leave the sad gray house. Two articles, the Poe family Bible and the clock, are still in the Bronx in the hands of Mr. W. H. Valentine and his brother. Mr. Valentine told me recently that he was a child of four when in 1850, he had his first Christmas-tree in the Poe cottage.

Since 1866, when the Valentines sold it, the property has belonged to Mr. John Berrian, Mr. Charles Carey, and finally to the present owner, M. Chauvet. Mr. Carey once offered the house to the Park Department on the condition that it be set up in Bronx Park. The offer was refused. The obvious course at the present time, for a city with real civic pride, would be to buy the house and the plot adjoining, as a part of Poe Park. Certainly no other house in this city can boast of having sheltered a poet engaged in the composition of poems of such haunting and melancholy beauty, and of such enduring worth.

APPENDIX.

NOTES AND MAP.*



* Prepared at Dr. MacCracken's request, by the Title Guarantee and Trust Co., through the courtesy of its president, Mr. Clarence H. Kelsey; amplified by Mr. John Hume, Assistant Engineer in charge of street openings in the Bronx.

The Poe Cottage stood in the northwest corner of a small tract of about one acre, almost triangular in shape,

622 Cp. 37 W. Co. originally and from a very early date, part of the farm of Hendrick Ryer. Some time before 1822 John Berrian came into possession of this plot, for in that year he sells it to Jonas Farrington for $500.00. This undoubtedly included the house, which seems to have been standing in April of 1816, for in that year Hendrick Ryer, conveying the adjacent form to his son, Henry Ryer, describes the boundary line as running "southwest along a ledge of rocks to land of John Berrian at a Cedar Bush at the point of rock, and thence along Berrian's land *back of the house* to the stone on the road to Kingsbridge marked "L."

Z Cp. 27 W. Co.

623 Cp. 191 W. Co. 622 Cp. 60 W. Co. 622 Cp. 47 & 112 Cp. 517 W. Co. Farrington sold the acre to Peter Lawrence in November, 1827, for $600.00, buying it back in March of 1828 for the same price. April 1st, 1828, he sold it to Richard Corsa for $650.00, who retained it until March 28th, 1846, when John Valentine purchased it for $1,000.00.

The Valentine family continued to own this little acre until 1866, so it appears certain, both from the records and from the article quoted above, that John Valentine was Poe's landlord.

The description of the acre in 622 Cp. 37 and subsequent deeds is as follows:

"Beginning at the northwest corner of the lot at a stone marked 'L.'

"Thence east and southeast along the land of Hendrick Ryer to a cedar bush by the first point of rocks.

"Thence along said land to land of Peter Lawrence, formerly of Richard Berrian.

"Thence along that land, southwest, in a line with a stone wall along the road by the stone barn, up the hill, close to a young apple tree.

"Thence, along the road to King's Bridge to the stone marked 'L' and beginning.

"One acre of land more or less."

POE AT THE END OF A CENTURY.

BY HAMILTON W. MABIE.



CENTURY has passed since Edgar Allan Poe was born and sixty-nine years since he died; surely the time has come for a just estimate of the quality and value of his work. It has been partly his fault and partly his misfortune that opinion about him has been so confused and conflicting; that he is, in the judgment of many, the most original figure in American literature; and that he is, in the opinion of others, a man of notable but unreal talent; a magician who achieved extraordinary effects by mechanical, artificial and insincere methods; a writer whose art was largely a subtle dexterity and not a skill of the soul.

This divergence of opinion found some justification in the confusion of Poe's life, its serious and undeniable faults, the disastrous weakness of his will. In so far as inadequate recognition of his genius has been due to moral weakness and to the limitations of his art, Poe has been paying the price exacted and rightly exacted of every man born in a world in which—to quote John Morley—morality is not *in* the order of things; it *is* the order of things.

But Poe's misfortunes have greatly outnumbered his faults. His prose and verse were written at a time when our literature was definitely and almost of set purpose didactic; when the moral feeling and teaching were so obvious that even the wayfaring man, though in great haste, could not escape them; when the passion for reform in the literature-producing section of the country was steadily rising; when, to quote Lowell, "all New England was a pulpit"; when to be a preacher was a part of every man's vocation because a host of Americans could not recognize any other form of teaching; when the meaning and function of art were so little understood in a new country sorely pressed by its tasks that they were negli-

gible; when practical work of some sort was held to be the only authentic and adequate expression of a man's spirit; when to be an artist meant, for the majority of Americans, to be a painter of tavern signs, a mere decorator, or a reveller strayed from ancient immoral revels with scantily clothed goddesses and muses, one who had no lot in a world in which the saving of a man's soul was the one real business of life.

Of beauty as the ultimate form of truth, and of art as the universal language of the human spirit, the men of Poe's time had only the faintest perception. If Hawthorne's subtle genius had not so deeply concerned itself with sin it would not have gained its early recognition; and Emerson's serene and beautiful insight, translating life into larger terms, made men of traditional temper shiver as if a fresh wind had suddenly penetrated a close room. A host of Poe's contemporaries did not understand him because they spoke a dialect while he used the universal language; and there are still those to whom the dialect is dear because, like the dialect spoken on the canals of Venice, it offers such a large vocabulary of abusive and profane words.

Poe was unfortunate in the period in which he lived because it was alien to him and out of sympathy with his point of view and conception of art; he has been also marvelously unlucky in his friends. Enemies are rarely dangerous; their motives are so obvious and their methods so clumsy that, in most cases, their attacks are purely spectacular; like those animosities which some newspapers substitute for principles. The bombs our enemies prepare with malevolent devotion and surreptitious skill generally burst in their hands. But friends are a great and serious peril; and at times one understands Ibsen's cynical remark that he could not afford to have friends; they were too expensive. When Gilfillan, in a moment of rashness, knocked at the door of the house in Cheyne Row and Carlyle opened it in person the ardent admirer introduced himself by saying: " Mr. Carlyle, I've been lecturing on you." " And a damned piece of impertinence it was," cried the great

man as he violently closed the door. It is a perilous hour for a writer when men and women confuse clamorous laudation with intelligent appreciation and will not let the air rest from their noisy protestations; and for the poet the hour in which he becomes food for recitation is often the hour of doom. That Poe has survived the pealing of the bells and the invocation to the Raven is a sign of his genius; it has been said, you remember, that the fact that the Christian religion had survived written sermons is proof of its divine origin.

It is a serious misfortune, too, when a man's friends juggle with the facts of his life or claim for him qualities and excellences which he obviously lacked, or push his inferior work to the front and demand that on the strength of it he be admitted into the company of the immortals. All these things Poe's unwise admirers have done: they have tried to ignore indisputable facts, they have claimed for him a vitality and range of genius which he does not possess; and they have pressed his secondary work on the attention of the world.

Poe's fame has survived the enormously over-worked popularity of "The Raven" and "The Bells." The first of these poems is probably known by more people than any other piece of verse yet written on this continent; obviously that is a fact which has its weight. In both poems Poe's technical skill is marvelous; he plays like a great virtuoso on the open and closed vowels; he produces the most striking effects by the use of the refrain and repetend. In the world of sound these poems are of a magical effectiveness; they have a hypnotic influence. But while the outer courts of the soul are swept with melody the inner courts are silent. Poe's genius must be sought elsewhere; there is a note of artificiality in both these poems; they have no spiritual root, and no deep artistic necessity fashioned them.

It has been Poe's misfortune also to fall into the hands of malicious or self-exploiting biographers, whose portraits of him have been as much out of drawing as is Froude's striking but misleading sketch of Carlyle; examples of that

kind of portrait painting in which the details are true and the general effect distorted and false. There are evil elements in every man, but to paint a man as if he were a devil is to violate a fundamental canon of art as well as of morals; for truth is the foundation of morals and art. It would be well if we could erase everything we know and the vast number of things we have been told about Poe and make fresh acquaintance with him through his work; but since that is impossible let us erase our preconceptions and prejudices and pay him the tribute we owe to all men, great or small, obscure or famous—the clear recognition and the frank statement of the truth.

We should have no concern with Poe's personal history on this anniversary if distorted reports and exaggerated statements had not affected the judgment of a host of people and were not thrust upon us by those who are afflicted with an ignoble relish for the weakness of their fellows, by those to whom insignificant personal details are more interesting than artistic achievements, and by those unimaginative and unsympathetic persons whose judgments are matters of the tape line and foot rule.

Fortunately it is possible to put this matter of Poe's infirmities and the principles of judgment to be applied in such cases succinctly and be done with them. It is, in the first place, immoral and useless to attempt to conceal the facts or to minimize their effects; the first duty to a man of Poe's quality is to state the facts dispassionately and to give them their full weight. It is, in the second place, immoral and useless to attempt to ignore the fact that the law is supreme and that it is executed with exact impartiality on the man of genius and on the average man; both pay the same penalties, but the man of genius pays most obviously and pays most dearly, and he pays where the penalty falls most heavily: on his power of growth, on his sanity of vision, on his grasp and concentration. Poe paid heavily, not in the charm of his art nor in his technical skill; but in the richness of his production,

the quality of his insight, the fibre of his art, the diminishing energy of his mind. He paid in the blighting interruptions of his work, his increasing detachment from men, his diminishing independence, the confusion of his affairs, the premature disintegration of his delicately endowed spirit. This is an old story; it was told and retold by his contemporaries; none knew so well as he; none felt its tragic blight so deeply as he. But must it be retold year after year as if it were the positive achievement and not the negative limitation; as if it were the sum total of a career rather than an incident in that career, impossible to overlook but always to be kept subordinate? Is there no statute of limitations against weaknesses of the body when the spirit is brought into judgment? Is the light of the torch to be denied because the hand that holds it sometimes wavers? Are we still so far from an understanding of life that we confuse the power of seeing weaknesses and offences with the ability to measure that relation of resistance to temptation which is the one determining factor in moral judgment

In its judgment of men of genius whose careers have been marked by moral confusion, wrote Carlyle in his noble essay on Burns, the world is habitually unjust; "unjust on many grounds, of which this one may be stated as the substance: It decides, like a court of law, by dead statutes; and not positively but negatively, less on what is done right, than on what is or is not done wrong." When two ships come to anchorage; one clean and sound, with masts straight and sails white, and the other blackened and stained, with broken spars and torn sails; before you pronounce judgment find out what voyages they have made: one may have crossed the harbor and the other may have come round the world! Men and women who have never been outside the harbor are prone to love judgment and pursue it with ignorant assurance.

Let us concede, too, the limitations of Poe's art, to keep for the moment on the negative side of his work with many of his critics; let us frankly recognize that he was a man of

solitary temper; that he never struck root in any soil and that coming upon his work without the marks of authorship it might be difficult to determine its locality; that there was a touch of unreality in that work and that it often lacks the deep sincerity of the art that is bone of a man's bone and flesh of his flesh; that his talent was not nourished and warmed by a large, rich humanity; that he worked habitually in phantasy, so to speak, and that his men and women are phantoms and the world they live in spectral; that the field of his observation and interest was narrow; that his prose and verse lack mass, reality, passion, spirituality.

Accept the confusion of his life and the limitations of his art: what remains?: "*the singular and exquisite genius of Poe,*" to quote Mr. Swinburne; a reputation and influence in Europe unique in its quality in the experience of American poets; the record of a service to American literature in criticism of high importance; a group of prose tales which in originality of invention, skill in construction and perfection of form place their author with the masters of the short story, and a few poems touched with the magic which wears beauty like a flower that has never known tool or toil. He stands beside Emerson and Hawthorne in the forefront of our literature by virtue of this individual genius, this distinction of craftsmanship, this grace of manner.

Do you question his right to this companionship because his claim rests on songs so few and of a quality so elusive? When was poetry measured by magnitude and valued by weight? Does not its imponderability, its aërial grace, carry it to a height to which no ardor of toil or straining of the muscles can rise? How little there is of Keats and how securely his kinship with the greater English poets rests on that group of odes and sonnets? How often Emerson came with serene and smiling face to the temple; how rarely he brought the gods the gifts of immortal poetry?

We rarely think of Poe as a critic but his work in this field filled a large place in the minds of his contemporaries and

must fill a large place in any future survey of American literature. It was in the columns of the "Southern Literary Messenger" that his penetrating and searching comment on the books and writers of the day made lovers of literature aware that a writer of fresh and original force was weighing and measuring the literary work of the hour. There were a few writers of high intelligence and a little group of men of real if somewhat narrow genius making the second chapter of our literary history, but there was so little authoritative criticism that local feeling and provincial taste were in possession of the field; and slovenly workmanship, commonplace thinking, silly sentimentalism and cheap and pretentious diction went unchallenged to the rewards of reputation and success. Seventy-four years ago last December Poe fell upon "Norman Leslie," a popular novel of flamboyant mediocrity, and made an example of it by a cutting disclosure of its crudity, in a review of such penetration and intelligence that it arrested the attention of thoughtful people in all parts of the country. Here, evidently, was a critic who knew the best that had been thought and said, to whom local pride and provincial standards were things of naught; a judge with ideas and convictions, who knew the law and had small mercy for offenders. It was clear also that here was a judge who invested his function with the interest which flows from a mind of extraordinary penetration and a style charged with individual force. "Norman Leslie" has gone the way of all crude and pretentious books into that limbo which must have been enormously enlarged when the printing press began to multiply the leaves which make for the weariness of nations, and Poe rendered a signal service to our literature by defining a standard in an age of ignorance and indifference to artistic quality in the arts. That he found pleasure in the destructive process does not diminish the judicial value of his work; a just judge must always find satisfaction in bringing offenders to book and making an end of that kind of anarchy which takes the form of inefficiency and slovenliness.

Poe does not belong with Goethe, Coleridge, Sainte Beuve and Arnold among the critics who have made criticism literature; but he had rare analytical power, a keen sense of form, a broad if discursive knowledge of literature, a perception of principles which gave him standing ground for impersonal judgment, and he did not object to controversy when sharp and merciless condemnation was the duty of the hour. In the admirable edition of his works edited by Mr. Stedman and Professor Woodberry, his criticism fills three volumes and has not lost its interest.

The time was ripe for frank and disinterested criticism, and Poe not only recognized the opportunity but regarded himself as having definite reformatory work to do. He was a born lover of beauty and of art for its own sake, without reference to anything beyond the immediate impression produced; and he was, therefore, well adapted to the task of judging a generation whose limited intelligence and uncertain taste in matters of workmanship made it the dupe or the victim of the cheap, the meretricious, and pretentious in contemporary writing. Much of his critical writing was of slight value; none of it is likely to survive by reason of its intrinsic interest, for Poe was creative and masterful only when his imagination was in play. But this work absorbed a large part of his time; it attracted wide attention among his contemporaries, and it filled an important place in the literary development of the country. He was quick to recognize excellence, and his early discernment of Hawthorne's quality must always be remembered to his credit; he hated slovenly work and vulgarity of manner, and never hesitated to hold them up to ridicule; he meant to be impartial and disinterested; but he was sometimes misled by his own wilfulness of mind, as when he failed to discriminate between Longfellow's frank and open use of existing literary material and plagiarism; and he was sometimes blinded by his theories of art, as in his sweeping condemnation of the writers who were more or less in sympathy with the Transcendental movement. He was not

entirely free from those personal influences which at times deflect the judgment of most critics: he was sometimes led away by the showy brilliancy of a momentary success; his poise was disturbed by his own conditions; he often wrote under great pressure and without due consideration and self-restraint. His critical work was, however, in the main, sound, wholesome, and of great value in educating public opinion. The fact that his estimates of Bryant, Cooper, Hawthorne, Lowell, and Tennyson, formed when these writers were making the first disclosures of their genius, were largely predictive of the judgment of a later and more critical age, is conclusive evidence of his possession of critical insight and power.

In a short story published in "The Southern Literary Messenger" in 1835 Poe brought onto the stage a figure that was to become typical in his fiction and to reappear again and again, under various names, in his later work. Egæus in *Berenice* belongs to the race of visionaries whose sphere of interest and experience touches the realities of life only at rare intervals and then solely for the sake of heightening the sense of its difference and remoteness. Gloomy towers, gray hereditary halls, a solitary and desolate landscape, subtly suggest to the senses the tragedy of disordered fancy, morbid temperament, diseased will, and abnormal fate which is to be worked out in a series of impressions designed to envelop the reader in an atmosphere of melancholy forebodings. The moment one breathes the air of Poe's tales an oppressive sense of something ominous and sinister is felt. For Poe had the art which Maeterlinck has so successfully practised, of securing possession of the reader's mind by assailing his senses one after the other with the same set of sensations. Poe's tales, like Maeterlinck's plays, are marvellously constructed to shut the reader in by excluding all other objects and impressions until his imagination is entirely at the mercy of the story-teller. Like those Egyptian temples which produced, by architectural devices, an impression of depth and space, out of all propor-

tion to their magnitude, Poe's tales have the magical and elusive influence of imaginative suggestion. We are never absolutely convinced of their reality, but we are entirely under their spell. They withdraw us completely from the world of reality by the skill with which the scenes are changed in the Opera House at Bayreuth; one scene merging into another so gradually that the spectator is transported from the sunlit glade to the dusky grotto without the consciousness that his senses are being deceived. Poe effects the transition into the realm of fantasy by an art so rare and so beguiling that he almost persuades us that we are dealing with realities and not with abstractions.

Egæus has no human warmth or passion; although, like most of Poe's heroes, he is consumed with the desire of possession. Berenice is a veritable phantasm, and never for a moment deceives us by the semblance of reality; her fate is repulsive, for Poe's artistic feeling often failed to keep him in the realm of pure suggestion in dealing with the horrible. In the most perfect of the prose tales, *The Fall of the House of Usher, Ligeia, Eleanora,* and *The Masque of the Red Death,* the full force of Poe's marvellous accuracy and *vraisemblance* of detail is felt by the imagination; but it must be added that the failure to completely possess the mind of the reader is due to no limitation in Poe's art; it is due to the limitation of his material. He went as far on the road to complete illusion as his subject-matter permitted; but his subject-matter was so largely made up of the morbid, the abnormal, the phantasmal, that it can never seem other than it was in its substance. In these tales, so full of powerful effects and charms wrought out of the potencies of sin, disease, solitary desolation, abnormal play of the senses, Poe's artistic quality is supreme; in them, as in half a dozen poems, he is one of the modern masters of technique; and their limitations as works of art must be sought not in the skill but in the soul of the workman. That limitation is found in the fact that Poe deals with experience of a very narrow and

limited kind; with emotions, passions, and tendencies which are exceptional and abnormal; with landscapes and localities which are essentially phantasmal and unreal, not in the sense of being purely imaginary, but of lying outside the range of imagination creating along lines of normal activity.

In the short story as in the short poem Poe was an artist of consummate skill who enriched our literature with a little group of masterpieces as distinctive and original as any tales of their kind that have appeared; after the novels of Cooper and the charming essays of Irving these stories were next in point of time to secure readers abroad. They made a deep impression on some of the younger writers in France and Germany; they were admirably translated; they gave fresh impulse and direction to the art of short story writing, and were the forerunnners of a brood of stories of terror, of baffling invention, of intricate and subtle analysis.

But it is by his poetry that Poe must ultimately stand or fall; for in his poetry his genius and its limitations are most clearly revealed. Although not in any sense a deep and consistent thinker, Poe made his art a matter of constant meditation, and, with the aid of Coleridge, evolved a theory both of verse and of short-story writing which throws clear light on his aims and methods. *The Rationale of Verse* and *The Poetic Principle* are lucid and definite in the statement of that theory. Truth, he held, appealed and gave expression to the intellect, passion stirred the heart, but beauty was the natural speech of the soul; beauty was, therefore, the expression of the deepest part of man's nature, the immortal part; its presence liberated the noblest forces in him, excited the highest emotions and supplied the deepest satisfactions. Under the pressure of the need of his own soul and the recognition of the beautiful in the world about him man is impelled to create, under the forms of art, a beauty of his own in which the real and the imaginary are harmoniously blended. From this creative activity truth and passion are not to be excluded; but they are to be kept in strict subordination to

the main purpose of creating a definite and overpowering impression of beauty. The soul is to be nourished and enriched not by ethical impulse, nor by the vision of larger knowledge, but by the dilation of the imagination. It must be added that beauty, in Poe's view, was a witness to the presence of the divine in the world, and had, therefore, a spiritual significance and quality. Poetry he defined as "the rhythmical creation of beauty"; he insisted upon brevity as essential to lyrical perfection, and went so far as to affirm that "a long poem does not exist"; he did not exclude ethical or allegorical conceptions, as his *Haunted Palace* and *The Conqueror Worm* show, but he held that the poet should aim to produce a single and perfectly definite effect, and that any secondary meaning should arise inevitably out of a clear impression of a beautiful creation; and he insisted that every piece of verse ought to have some marked quality of metre or rhythm.

If these principles or maxims are applied to Poe's verse, it will be found that it stands the test. No artist has made his work more consistently embody and express his conception of the aims and methods of his art. Unlike Wordsworth and Whitman, Poe gains by the approach of his poetry to his philosophy. So far as his philosophy of art was concerned, there was nothing original in it; it was, however, exactly suited to his temperament and his genius. So far as his maxims of construction are concerned, they are the laws of his own nature rather than of art. They so nicely bring out the structure of his own work that the suspicion of the *ex post facto* origin cannot be avoided.

Within the limits which Poe set to the poetic art, there was ample room for the deepest and noblest activity of the poetic impulse; for Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Tennyson. But this field was greatly narrowed by his maxims for verse production. In this narrower field of artistic vision and power he made his great and lasting success. In at least half a dozen poems he has shown a skill akin to magic in producing a single striking and unusual effect, by concentration of in-

terest, subordination of secondary meaning, compression of thought within a narrow compass, and the identification of the poem with a distinctive metrical effect. Within these narrow limits, imposed by his own genius, confirmed by his character, and later, rationalized into a philosophy, Poe was a master. He fashioned, under these rules, a few poems which are finalities, and a finality marks the end of the path. Poe has gone as far as man can go in his own field, and that is saying that he was a creative artist; one whose work betrays not only perfection of form but individuality of touch.

At the end of a hundred years how stands the account with Poe and what place does he hold in our literature? Poets, critics, story-writers of high rank abroad have given him the first place; at home there has been a great confusion of voices; reckless charge and countercharge; unmeasured condemnation, unmeasured laudation. In the Hall of Fame, of which the university whose guests we are today is the custodian but without voice in the selection of names inscribed on its walls and therefore free of all responsibility, Poe's has not yet found a place. That is a small matter so far as his fame is concerned, for fame does not rest on the suffrages of any lesser jury than the great body of intelligent readers. If symmetry of life and faultless contour of conduct are the tests which determine fitness for this enrolment among the immortals Poe must be content to be excluded as Coleridge and Shelley and Burns—all irregular in life but none of them corrupt in nature—Chopin and Wagner, Raphael and Turner would be shut out were they brought to the same seat of judgment. If character, that is the equation between temptation in temperament, inheritance, physique and the insidious and searching influence of conditions, and resistance, the final direction of the struggling spirit in the storm and mystery of life, is the determining element then the exclusion of Poe is a usurpation of a function which Infinite Wisdom alone is intelligent and just enough to discharge. If the determining test is, as it ought to be, the quality of a man's

work then the exclusion of Poe's name is a survival of the provincialism of judgment and taste against which he raised his voice seventy years ago. Is the selection of names in the Hall of Fame to be a record of individual tastes and opinions or of the judgment of that company of intelligent readers who constitute a court of ultimate jurisdiction?

The real obstacle in the way of the adequate appreciation of Poe has been and is the lack of the sense of beauty, the undeveloped artistic feeling of the country. In this vast workshop, where a new order of society is being fashioned. his work has been and still is misunderstood and undervalued. Its detachment from work-a-day interests, from ethical agitations, from social and political movements, from the toils and trials of the hour, from the spirit of restless energy, have seemed to many Americans to show an entire lack of seriousness, and without seriousness there is no real art; they have failed to see that Poe was deeply and genuinely serious in his love of beauty, his passion for perfection of form. In his vision of the place of beauty in the rounded life of the soul, in the harmonious social expression of humanity, he was far in advance of the civilization in which he lived, and he is still far in advance of any general sensitiveness to the delicate and spiritual harmonies of which art is the language.

The sum and substance of Poe's real offence is that he was an artist and an artist only. Poe reacted so radically from the practical ideals and work of his time that he took refuge in pure ideality. The refuge of the artist is always to be found in his art; and to a nature so sensitive as Poe's, a mind so delicately adjusted to its tools and its task, and so easily thrown out of relation to them, there was perhaps no other resource. Between the art of the author of *Israfel* and the life about him there was a deep abyss which the poet never attempted to cross. The material with which he constantly dealt becomes significant alike of the extraordinary susceptibility of his genius, and of the lack of the forms of life about him to satisfy and inspire him. He expresses the dissonance

which has so far existed between the essentially ideal quality of the American mind and the intensely practical character of the task which has fallen to Americans. If he had been born a century later, his verse and prose might have come closer to the heart of his people, without losing that exquisite fineness which reveals the rare and beautiful quality of his genius. It is hardly possible to miss the significance of the fact that two men of such temper and gifts as Hawthorne and Poe were driven by inward necessity to deal with the life of an earlier time, with life in an older and riper society, or with the life of the spirit in its most disturbed and abnormal experiences.

Poe's passion for perfection of form, his ideality, and the sensitiveness of his temperament are all subtly combined in the quality of distinction which characterizes his best work in prose and verse. His individuality is not only strongly marked, but it is expressed with the utmost refinement of feeling and of touch. In his prose and verse, Poe was pre-eminently a man who not only brought artistic integrity and capacity to his work, but suffused it with purity, dignity, and grace. In the disconnected product of his broken life there is not a line to be blotted out on the score of vulgarity or lack of reticence concerning the hidden and sacred things of life. In his most careless imaginative writing the high quality of his mind is always apparent. So ingrained is this distinction of tone that, however he may waste his moral fortunes, his genius is never cheapened nor stained. In his worst estate the great traditions of art were safe in his hands.

Poe's very detachment in artistic interest from the world about him was a positive gain for the emancipation of the imagination of the young country, so recently a province of the Old World. His criticism was almost entirely free from that narrow localism which values a writer because he belongs to a section, and not because his work belongs to literature. He brought into the field of criticism large knowledge of the best that had been done in literature, and clear perception of

the principles of the art of writing. His touch on his contemporaries who won the easy successes which are always within reach in untrained communities was often caustic, as it had need to be; but the instinct which made him the enemy of inferior work gave him also the power of recognizing the work of the artist, even when it came from unknown hands. He discerned the reality of imagination in Hawthorne and Tennyson as clearly as he saw the vulgarity and crudity of much of the popular writing of his time. By critical intention, therefore, as well as by virtue of the possession of genius, which is never provincial, Poe emancipated himself, and went far to emancipate American literature, from the narrow spirit, the partial judgment, and the inferior standards of a people not yet familiar with the best that has been thought and said in the world. To the claims of local pride he opposed the sovereign claims of art; against the practice of the half-inspired and the wholly untrained he set the practice of the masters. When the intellectual history of the country is written, he will appear as one of its foremost liberators.

Poe's work holds a first place in our literature, not by reason of its mass, its reality, its range, its spiritual or ethical significance, but by reason of its complete and beautiful individuality, the distinction of its form and workmanship, the purity of its art. With Hawthorne he shares the primacy among all who have enriched our literature with prose or verse of high artistic quality; but, unlike his great contemporary, he has had to wait long for adequate and just recognition. His time of waiting is not yet over; for while the ethical insight of Hawthorne finds quick response where his artistic power alone would fail to move, Poe must be content with the suffrages of those who know that the art which he practiced with such magical effect is in itself a kind of righteousness. "I could not afford to spare from my circle," wrote Emerson to a friend, "a poet, so long as he can offer so indisputable a token as a good poem of his relation to what is highest in Being." To those who understand that char-

acter is never perfect until it is harmonious, and truth never finally revealed until it is beautiful, Poe's significance is not obscured nor his work dimmed by the faults and misfortunes of his life. The obvious lessons of that pathetic career have been well learned; it is time to seek the deeper things for which this fatally endowed spirit stood; for the light is more than the medium through which it shines.



CHINESE PUZZLE OF CARVED IVORY

Given to Miss Sarah F. Miller by Poe, and by her presented to the Bronx Society of Arts and Sciences; at present on exhibition in the Society's museum in the Lorillard Mansion, Bronx Park.



THE POE COTTAGE FROM THE ORCHARD ON THE SOUTHEAST

In its original location

Photograph taken in 1884 by Stoughton

POE'S COTTAGE AT FORDHAM

JOHN HENRY BONER

Here lived the soul enchanted
By melody of song;
Here dwelt the spirit haunted
By a demoniac throng;
Here sang the lips elated;
Here grief and death were sated;
Here loved and here unmated
Was he, so frail, so strong.

Here wintry winds and cheerless
The dying firelight blew,
While he whose song was peerless
Dreamed the drear midnight through,
And from dull embers chilling
Crept shadows darkly filling
The silent place, and thrilling
His fancy as they grew.

Here with brow bared to heaven,
In starry night he stood,
With the lost star of seven
Feeling sad brotherhood.
Here in the sobbing showers
Of dark autumnal hours
He heard suspected powers
Shriek through the stormy wood.

Proud, mad, but not defiant,
He touched at heaven and hell.
Fate found a rare soul pliant
And rung her changes well.
Alternately his lyre,
Stranded with strings of fire,
Led earth's most happy choir,
Or flashed with Israfel.

No singer of old story
Luting accustomed lays,
No harper for new glory,
No mendicant for praise,
He struck high chords and splendid,
Wherein were fiercely blended
Tones that unfinished ended
With his unfinished days.

Here through this lowly portal,
Made sacred by his name,
Unheralded immortal
The mortal went and came.
And fate that then denied him,
And envy that decried him,
And malice that belied him,
Have cenotaphed his fame.

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